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FIVE STRAWS

Gathered from REVOLU-
TIONARY FIELDS

By HIRAM BINGHAM, Jun^{un}



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F I V E S T R A W S
G A T H E R E D F R O M R E V -
O L U T I O N A R Y F I E L D S

Of this Small Sheaf of Straws *One Hundred and One*
Copies have been printed — and *Ninety-Nine* have
been bound.

This one may be confidered to be

The 83rd Copy

FIVE STRAWS

Gathered from REVOLU-
TIONARY FIELDS

By HIRAM BINGHAM, Jun^r



CAMBRIDGE (Massachusetts), *In the Year*

M D C C C C I

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BY HIRAM BINGHAM, JUN.

To Her

who has always made

CHRISTMAS DAY

the happiest Day of all the Year

MY MOTHER

W a r n i n g ! ! !

GOOD Friend, *Beware!* Here thou hast no *Learned Treatise*. Here is no *Poem*, divinely inspired. In thy Hands thou dost not hold aught but a few Straws, a mere *Sheaflet*. Here are no great Thoughts, no Flights of the Imagination, no proud Records. If, from the *Title*, some should suppose that here they might find somewhat of Use in the *Harvesting* of their *Grain*, let them be undeceived, for of all such not one will fail to be *grievously disappointed*.—

Left thou, *most gentle Reader*, suffer with them, hear the *Fable of the Straws* & from it learn the Use to which thou mayest put this little Sheaf.——

In a far Country there lived a Mariner whose Name was unknown to all his Fellows, but whose Fame extendeth even to this Day. He was wont to go out on the Deep in Ships of great Burthen, & in Barques, & of all Men he was most justly famed for going & returning quickly.——

Now it was seen that when the Wind blew with great Strength this Man was no more successful than his Fellows, but when the Wind was soft so that no one knew whether it blew this Way or

*Of the
Nature
of this
Booke*

*Of Counsel
to the
Reader*

*Of the
Fable of
the Straws*

*Of the Suc-
cess of the
Mariner*

W a r n i n g ! ! !

<p><i>Of his Death</i></p>	<p>that, <i>this Man</i> was alway the First to arrive in Port. And no one knew the cause thereof (for their eyes were feeble).——</p>
<p><i>Of his Secret</i></p>	<p>Now when the Days of the Life of <i>this Man</i> had reached fourscore Years & eighteen, he died. In his Chest were found his greatest Treasures & with them a small Sheaf of Straws bound together with a Wisp. For many Years no Man knew the meaning of these Straws nor did anyone understand the Secret of the Successful Seaman. But at length there came a Day whereon the Mast of the Ship in which he had died was taken down. And lo, to the Top of the Mast was found affixed a Straw like those in the Chest. Then was brought to Mind the Custom of that Man, how in a soft Wind it was his wont to gaze steadfastly at the Top of the Mast. By the Straw which he had fixed there was he able to gauge the Direction of the Wind, even though it blew softly this Way & that. Thus was he more successful than his Fellows.——</p>
<p><i>Of the Ways of Seamen</i></p>	<p>Now when this became known among them, they went & did likewise, even unto this Day.—— If thou hast not been among Seamen, believe me this is true. But if thou art already conversant with the <i>Ways of Seamen</i> & yet hast never seen the <i>Straw</i> at the Top of each Mast, thine Eyes must also be feeble. Remember the</p>



W a r n i n g ! ! !

Seamen who saw not the Wind Gauge of their Fellow.—

Now as there are Winds and Winds, Currents of Air & Currents of Thought, so there are *Straws* & *Straws*, some for the *Sailor* & some for the *Searcher after Truth*.—

Those *Straws* that are most easily *seen* are often too large to shew the Direction of the *softest* Winds. But the more *delicate Straws* are *seen* only with Difficulty. Of these *last*, perchance, thou mayest find here a fundry Few.—

They have been gathered from *Revolutionary* Fields, being the Letters written from the Camp to his Home by a *Soldier of the Continental Army*. If thou dost desire to understand the Mysteries of the Hearts of Men and their *Actions* one toward another, thou mayest perchance find a *Straw* in this Sheaf that will shew thee some new Current of *Feeling*. And if thou art seeking to comprehend the Thoughts of thy *Fathers* when they fought to cast off the Yoke which their *Fathers* had laid upon them, then thou mayest well consider *all these Straws*. For they are of *those Days*.—

*Of Divers
Kinds of
Straws*

*Of the
Nature of
these Five
Straws*

T h e W i s p

Y^e Winde doeth blowe—
And Thou wouldst knowe
Whaer it doeth goe—
A Straw maie shewe.

F i r s t S t r a w

Still Water August 6th 1777 —

About 24 Miles from Albany

BROTHER: Having so convenient an Opportunity, though Time be ever so precious, I will take a Minute to give you some Idea of my present Situation & of this Part of the Globe. I suppose you have had some Information of our Retreating from Place to Place by the Letter I wrote to my *Father* when at *Moses Creek*—Since then we left that Place & march'd to *Saratoga* & from thence to *Still Water*—having a few cut off by the *Indians* during the March—by what I can learn the Generals are now determined to make a Stand—I shall not be very particular in giving you an Account of our whole Retreat from *Ticonderoga* to this Place as you have had it by my *Father's* Letter & will have a good Opportunity of getting Information by way of *Col: Long's Regt*:—

The Army are somewhat unhealthy, their Disease being chiefly the *Fever Ague & Dysentery*, scarcely any but what have had some Complaint—*Col: Wire's* Son, a Captain in Our *Regt*: died last Thursday at *Albany* of the Wound he receiv'd at *Fort Ann*, & was very decently inter'd, & is greatly lamented, much

*Of his
present
Situation*

*Of the
Retreat of
Genl Gates'
Army*

*Of Col:
Wire's
Son*

F i r s t S t r a w

*Of the
Method of
Living*

*Of his
Health*

may be said to his *Praise*, he was courageous, fought like a *Hero*, was friendly, & much be-
lov'd, in the Camp. *Macclintock* has had a
long Spell of Sicknefs of the *Fever Ague*, is
growing better. *Col: Scammell's* is very poorly
of the same Disorder but getting better.——

It is not at all to be wondered at if we have a
few sick, when living upon fresh Provision &
lodging upon the *bare Ground* cover'd with
Dew without Blanketts having a few Boards
for Cover — But now they begin to be more
healthy as they get hardned to this Method
of living — I find there is a great deal in *Use*,
when at *Ticonderoga* I thought I had very poor
lodging, when laying on my Mattress, what can
I say now — *this I can*, that I sleep as well
upon the Ground as ever I did on a Bed, but
how long shall this be my Mind, *God only
knows* — Since I left *Ti*: I have purchas'd a
Blankett which I find very useful — at Night
I wrap myself in it & lay down upon the bare
Ground & *sometimes* upon Boards, in the Morn-
ing my Blankett is wet, cover'd with Dew : But
after all these troublesome Scenes I am still the
same, *in good Health*, hoping long to continue
so, & live to give our *Enemies* a severe *Flogging*
yet, & be in Possession of my Baggage they

F i r s t S t r a w

took at *Skeenborough* — I have this to comfort myself with, that I fav'd *myself* with what I had on, which happen'd not to be my best — *Cloaths* are amazing dear here as well as every thing else. R. Shirts are sold for 20 & 25 Dollars a piece — if my *Wages* were not higher than I expected when at Home, I would *by no means* tarry, but as they are rais'd, & for the Love I have for the *Country*, I can by no Mean's think of leaving the *Army* — I hope to get some Cloathing here to rub along for the present, & if I should not come Home in the *Fall*, I should be glad to have some Cloathing sent me — If there is a good Opportunity I should be glad of a cotten & linnen *Shirt* & one Ruffle'd with Couple neck *Stocks* & a Pair or two of worsted *Stockings*, I shall not mention any more as it will be troublesome getting them here at so great a *Distance* — I saved none of my Cloaths except my *wilton Coat*, 1 white Jackett, 1 *p^r* thick cloth *Breeches* 1 *Shirt*, 1 *p^r* *Stockings*, 1 *p^r* *Shoes*, *Hatt*, & *Great Coat* — Almost all the Officers & Soldiers shar'd the same Fate which makes Cloathing so *excessive* dear.

A *Soldier's Life* is such that no one can have a true Idea of without the *Trial*.

*Of his
Cloaths*

*Of leaving
the Army*

*Of his
Needs*

*Of what
he saved*

*Of a Sol-
dier's Life*

F i r s t S t r a w

	<p>It is such that I am convinc'd will suit <i>no Man</i> except he have a Constitution like <i>Iron</i> — If any one has a mind to experience let him come <i>now</i> & he will find what it is to live the Life of a Soldier in <i>every</i> Sense of the Word — Let him come, <i>now or never</i>, as said old <i>Parson Task</i> when he preach'd to <i>Sinners</i>.——</p>
<p><i>Of his Friends</i></p>	<p>There is several of my old Acquaintance from <i>Massachusetts State</i>, my Freshman Sumner at College, who is a <i>Captain</i> of a Company from <i>Milton</i> — D^r Hastings, Surgeon of a <i>Regt</i>. — <i>Haywood & Maynard</i> my ClassMates — There is a <i>Number</i> of very respectable <i>Gentlemen</i> in the Army.——</p>
<p><i>of Forage</i></p>	<p>There is a very good Crop in these Parts, but soon comes a <i>Desolation</i>, wherever we march we keep our Horses in the Fields among <i>Corn & Oats</i>, So that the <i>Enemy</i> if they gain the Ground may have poor fare for them & their Horses. —</p>
<p><i>of Tories</i></p>	<p><i>Tories</i> are very troublesome here — many of them take up Arms against us & lurk in the Woods with the <i>Indians</i> waiting for a <i>Sculp</i>. It is believ'd the Tories have <i>sculp'd many</i> of their Countrymen as there is a Premium from <i>Burgoyne</i> for <i>Sculps</i>. They are daily taken & brought in by our Scouts & I believe some of them will swing <i>very soon</i>.——</p>

F i r s t S t r a w

The *Indians* treat both Sexes with the same Barbarity, have kill'd & sculp'd *whole Family's* together *Men Women & Children*, at one Place as our Men were passing they saw a Man his Wife & Children sculp'd (*by those Savages*) gaping & expiring & the Hogs rooting their Body's.

*Of
Indians*

A few Day's ago I rode a *little Distance* from Camp where we had a few Men stationed to guard the *Sick*. I had just past the Place where a Party of *Indians* happened to lay & stop'd at the first House talking with an Officer; as I set upon my Horse, out rush'd those *Indians* & fir'd at some Men swimming in the Water & chaf'd Some as they were passing, I seeing this scream'd to the Guard to pursue them, and rode towards them, they discharg'd their Pieces towards *us* & fir'd one Ball into the House not far from the Door *where I was*; immediately upon our pursuing them they ran into the Woods & got off, we were in such Haste they had not Time to get a *Sculp*, they kill'd two, One shot in the Water who got out & ran a considerable Distance before he fell — Since then they have cut off more of our Men — *One Hundred Indians in the Woods do us more harm than 1000 British Troops*. They

*Of an
exciting
Adventure*

*Of Indians
as Troops*

F i r s t S t r a w

<i>Of his Friends</i>	<p>have been the Death of many brave Fellows — I hope they will meet with their Reward for their <i>curfed</i> Barbarity.——</p> <p>Apologize to my <i>Relations & Acquaintance</i> for my not writing them this Opportunity for I had not the least Thought of <i>Col: Longs Regt</i>: being permitted to set out now, when the Enemy are <i>every Day</i> expected.——</p> <p>Give my best Respects to them — particularly to my <i>Father & Mother</i> — & at <i>Cap: Yeaton's</i>. I remain with due <i>Respect</i> Your L. Brother</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>W^m Weeks</i></p>
<i>Of Money Matters</i>	<p>NB. A Letter from You is expected <i>very soon</i>. Those who <i>write</i> shall have an Answer.——</p> <p>(I shall not send Home any Money <i>now</i>, as I have not receiv'd but two Months Wages yet. If that Debt of <i>Cap: Yeaton's</i> is not paid, settle it for me and you shall be made whole to your <i>Satisfaction</i>.——</p> <p>(<i>My Wages are forty Dollars pr Month</i>)——</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To Mr. Clem: Weeks att Greenland —</p>

S e c o n d S t r a w

Turkey Farm — near Albany October 9th 1777

I HAVE the Pleasure to inform You that *Burgoine is retreating in the greatest Confusion*, that we have drove them out of their Lines with the Loss of *several Hundred* of their Men kill'd, wounded & taken Prisoners, the Day before Yesterday, likewise a *considerable Number of Tents & Cannon*. The Particulars have not yet [reached me] as I am a little Distance from the Army making out my Pay Rolls. The *Hessians* are very troublesome to *Burgoine*, keep a continual *Quarrelling* with the British Troops, and desert very fast. There is more or less [Desertion] every Day ; sometimes they come in almost *half Companys*. We have been very successful of late. Since the Battle about a Fortnight ago, have had Intelligence almost every Day from their Army by *Deserters* or *Prisoners*.—

The last Battle before this, we unhappily lost some brave Officers: our *L: Col: Colburn*, *Col: Adams*, & a *Lieu: in our Reg: —* and a few others wounded. *Cap: Bell of Newcastle* is very badly wounded, shot thro the Side.——

Never Men behav'd better than ours did [in] the late Battle ; as was the Expression of *Gen: Gates*

*Of the
Retreat of
Burgoine*

*Of the
Hessians*

*Of their
Losses*

*Of the
Battle of
October 7th*

S e c o n d S t r a w

	about two Brigades, chiefly <i>Newhampshire Troops</i> [who] fac'd almost their whole Army & obliged them to retreat several Times.—
Of going Home	I hope we shall soon break up <i>Burgoines Army</i> so that I may have a convenient Opportunity of coming Home—I <i>expect</i> to come Home in about two months.—
Of his Cloaths	I receiv'd your Letter dated <i>Aug^r. 25th, Sept 4th</i> —with the <i>Shirt & two p^r Stockings</i> , which came at a very suitable Time as I was much in want of them—now I hope I shall be able to rub along 'till I can come Home.—
Of his Coat	The <i>Coat</i> which you have mention'd of <i>Cap^t. Yeaton's</i> , I can well do without, & if it is agreeable to him to take it again with some Consideration for <i>Damages</i> , twould suit me much better, than to give that Price—As I expect to take one out of the <i>Store</i> . But if you think he would not be very willing to take it, without the least hard Thought, <i>by all means</i> keep it, & I will see him satisfied.—
Of a Hatt	If you will buy me a good Hatt against I come Home I should be exceeding glad.—
Of the News	For the Particulars of the late Transactions & of the <i>Enemy's Retreat</i> & the <i>Loss</i> they sustain'd You can have by way of <i>M^r Storer</i> at <i>Col^t. Langdons</i> . <i>Col^t. Langdon</i> or <i>Cap^t. Hill</i> [will give you]

S e c o n d S t r a w

a much better Account than I am able to give
You, as I am a little Distance from Camp &
in *great Haste*.——

Having nothing further to write at present I
must bid you *adieu*.——

Wm Weeks

P.S. Remember me to all my *Friends* & old
Acquaintance—let them know that I am in
Health & expect to see them soon.——

[*To*
Maj. William Weeks
att
Greenland]

[NOTE : Nothing shows more graphically the confusion and excitement, in the midst of which this letter was written, than the number of omissions evinced by the square brackets. It will be noticed that more words had to be supplied in this letter than in all the others combined.—

H. B.]

T h i r d S t r a w

To his
Father

Of the
Movements
of the
Troops

Of the
Northern
Troops

Of the
Itch

Fish Kill Nov^r 3^d 1777

TH O' we are in the greatest *Confusion & Hurry*, being on a March from *Albany* to *Philadelphia* (as we have now receiv'd Orders), I, having an Opportunity to send *Home*, by way of *Serj' Chase* of *Stratham*, will write a few Lines to let you know that I am well, & that since the *Surrender* of *Burgoine's Army* at *Saratoga*, there has been little or nothing to do there, & that the chief of the Troops are now marching toward *New York*. *Genl. Poors* Brigade expect to proceed on to *Philadelphia* to join *Genl. Washington* — Last Night we got to this Place & immediately we shall march on to *Peeks Kill* &c — This March toward *Philadelphia* was not only very unexpected but very little wish'd for, as the *Northern Troops* have been this Campaign much neglected by *Genl. Congress*, not only as to *Money* but *Cloaths*. Our *Officers & Men* in general are destitute of *Money* & have the *Itch* very badly. Soon I expect the *Money* will come & their *Wants* be relieved & *I hope cured of the Itch* —

T h i r d S t r a w

A few Days ago I expected to see Home *soon* — but now I expect the Time will be *long first* as we are going *from* Home——

I am sorry that I am under a *Necessity* to write something that's *very disagreeable* as the Death of a dear Relation — My *Uncle Storer*, who died very suddenly the Night before we left *Albany* — While we were at *Saratoga* he complain'd of a bad Cold; the Night before we left there I slept with him; & *advise'd him to leave the Regt.* & tarry at some House till he got better — *He said* if he did not feel better he would. The next Morning we all set out for *Albany* with *Burgoine & his Troops* — About *Nine Miles* from *Albany* we had to cross 3 *Sprouts i. e.* small Rivers, just before we came to them my Uncle had his Horse stolen — He got on a Waggon to ride over them. The Waggon overfet & *wet him from Head to Foot* — This, with the Cold he just before had, was the Means of carrying him from *Time to Eternity*, in so short a Space of Time——

My Cousen *Joseph Storer* was well a few Days ago, when I left him at *Albany*. He expected to march the next Day with *New Hampshire Militia for Peek's Kill*——

Sir: Being in the greatest Haste must beg

*Of the
Death of
his Uncle*

*Of his
Cousen*

T h i r d S t r a w

Leave to subscribe myself Your very obedient
& dutiful Son *W^m Weeks*—

[*To Major William Weeks*
att Greenland
New Hampshire]

F o u r t h S t r a w

Camp Valley Forge, Febr. 16th 1778

IT being a *Custom* with me to write every Opportunity, it would be odd if I should neglect this, to write, by my old Friend *Cap^t Kimball of Atkisson*—The first thing I must enter upon is the *Scarcity of Provisions* here. *Death* seem'd to stare the poor Soldiers in the Face; for this *five Days* the Soldiers have not drawn [the] Tenth Part of their Allowance; which I believe is chiefly owing to the *Com^d Gen^l Neglect*, and for which G—d grant he may *suffer*. This Day *Gen^l Washington* was acquainted of the *Treatment* the Army had met with, and immediately made a strict *Enquiry* into the Matter, and soon found out some Method to the better *Support* of his Army—I believe for the future we shall have much better Fare, as so good a Man as *his Excellency* has been thoroughly acquainted with the *Treatment* we have receiv'd, and as he must know that if an Army is not well supported that not so great Dependance can be put upon them—

This Moment arriv'd a *Quantity of Beef* which seem'd to give *Joy to every distressing Soul*—As soon as the *Brigade Commissary* receiv'd

*Of the
Scarcity of
Provisions*

*Of Gen^l
Washington*

Of Joy

F o u r t h S t r a w

*Of the
Bearer of
the Letter*

*Of
Honours
conferred*

it, he cries out to the Soldiers — *come unto me ye that are a hungred & I will give you to eat* & behold they flock'd around him as thick as Bees, & when they had all eat, they gave him *Thanks: & of the Fragments that remain'd*, I am sure [they] would not have fill'd *one Baskitt* — Joy seems to be seen in *every* Countenance since the reverse of Fortune, G—d g—t it may continue so—

I suppose you will see the Bearer, *Cap! Kimball*, as I have desir'd him to call at our House (he talking of going to *Portsmouth*) And I believe I should come Home with him [if] he did not go to *Albany* to do some Business with *Cap! Fogg* which Jobb I have the good Fortune to have settled while at *Albany*—

I am somewhat desirous to see *Greenland* before another Campaign comes on, as an Opportunity then cannot well be had— And I am yet undetermin'd about coming Home, But seeing so many going off, I may possibly take the Start with *Doctor Hovey* in about one Month — *Gen! Sullivan* expects to set out in a few Days for *New Hampshire* — This Day I must be at *Gen! Sullivan's* to take a *Dinner* with him. The other Day I had as great an Honour confer'd upon me—I had the Honour to

F o u r t h S t r a w

take a Glas of Wine with *Genl Washington & his Lady* — But at the same time I should count as great an Honour to have the satisfaction of seeing conversing & taking a Glas of Wine with my — *Friends at Home*——

If an Opportunity can be had *by some safe Hand* I should be glad of a *Shirt* or two, with a *p^r* or two false Sleeves a Couple *p^r* *Stockings*, few Stocks of course, *p^r* white Breeches *made full large*, with a white Waistcoat ~~and if a good Hatt can be sent me~~ it would be greatly agreeable to have the Breeches & Waistcoat *homespun*——Cloathing of every kind being *excessive dear & scarce here* (& it being uncertain whether I shall come Home or no)——

If any thing of the above can be sent me, let the Price be ever so large, [it] would be very agreeable——

Please to remember me to all Friends at Home

W^m. Weeks

N.B. I should be glad to have the above false Sleeves *ruffled*——The above would come safe by any *commis^d* Officer of the Battalion——

N.B. I should be glad if you would be *careful* of speaking about the bad Fare of the Army, As it might be a *Discouragement* to the Men to enlist——

*Of his
Needs*

*Of
Matters of
Importance*

F i f t h S t r a w

Camp Valley Forge April 30th 1778

*Of the
small Pox
& of In-
noculation*

*Of the
End of one
Daniels of
Durham*

DEAR BROTHER — Since my last I have had the *Honour* of having the *small Pox* by way of *Innoculation*, & so favourable that I scarcely expect to have a Receipt for it — Since that I have been so unhappy as to have the *Fever Ague*, which has brought me very low, reduc'd me far more, than dieting for the *small Pox* — The *small Pox* was nothing more to me, than dieting — I took the *Air* every Day whilst I had it, & had but one sick Turn worth mentioning, that was when the *Pox* was coming out — All our *New England* Troops who had not [had] the *small Pox*, have been *innoculated* & but very few died — It put an End to one *Daniels* of *Durham* a *Corporal* in *Col: Scammell's Regt*: who took it the natural Way, he made not the least Preparation, supposing he had it the last War — He was a very civil Fellow, *worthy of Promotion*, the best of the Name — The *Fever Ague* with which I have been troubled, has paid a Visit to many of our *New England* Troops, but are all like to do well — There is a Prospect of our having a *Grand Army* in the Field soon — the Troops come in very fast from the *Southward* —

F i f t h S t r a w

I expect this Campaign will put an End to the War — *Gen^l Sullivan* has lately gone to take the Command at *Rhode Island* —

*Of the
End of
the War*

As the Campaign is coming on, I have but little Expectation of coming Home before *Commencement*. Should be glad [if] you would send the Money for my Degree, and I will satisfy you when I return — Likewise I should be glad if I could have sent me something for *Summer Drefs* As there is nothing to be had here without giving more than treble the worth of it. Hats here are sold for *30 Dollars* Shoes *8 d^s* and other things in Proportion — The following Articles would be ~~very~~ agreeable as the *Summer* Approaches fast — 1 or 2 fine Shirts — 1 or 2 *P^r* white Stockings, few Stocks & *Pockett* Handkerchiefs — a *P^r* white Breeches & Waistcoat — I should be very glad of the above Articles, if they can be sent conveniently, by any *safe Hand*. I imagine an Opportunity may be had by way of *L^d Wedgwood* of *North Hill* who offer'd to bring any thing of the kind for me. —

*Of his
Degree*

*Of his
Summer
Drefs*

I have been looking out this some time for a Letter from Home, *but behold none appeareth* — I should be glad You would write the first, & every Opportunity, & give me a good

*Of an In-
expressible
Satisfaction*

F i f t h S t r a w

History of *every thing* that has happen'd since my leaving Home as it would give me an *in-expressible Satisfaction*—

PS. Remember me to *all Friends*—

W^m Weeks

[To
 Mr. Clem^t Weeks
 att
 Greenland—]

[NOTE: The coveted degree, an "A. M.," was duly secured by the payment of ten dollars. He had already received an "A. B." in 1775 — see page 29. H. B.]

V a d e - M e c u m

W^M WEEKS was born at the Time of the Beginning of the *French & Indian War*, in 1755, in a little Settlement which lies a few Miles South West of *Portsmouth, New Hampshire*, & which carries the forbidding Name of *Greenland*. He was one of *thirteen Children*.—

His Father, Major William Weeks, had seen Service in the *New Hampshire Horse Guards*, but at the Time of the *Letters* he was Justice of the Peace in *Greenland* & in the Quorum of *Rockingham County*. To him the Education of his Children was a Matter of the gravest Concern. His Daughters were educated in the Schools of *Boston*, and two of his Sons, *Clement* & *W^m Weeks*, were sent to *Harvard*.—

W^m Weeks came to Cambridge at the Age of *Sixteen*. His College Course was not without *Variety*. During his Junior Year occurred the *Boston Tea Party*, while in the Spring of his Senior Year came the Days of *Lexington & Concord*, of the Marshalling of Troops & of the *Siege of Boston*.—

Shortly after returning Home, he enlisted “for *four Months*” to aid in the Defense of *Portf-*

*Of the
Writer
of the
Letters*

*Of his
Father*

*Of his
Life at
Harvard
1771-1775*

*Of his
Enlistment
1775*

V a d e - M e c u m

<p><i>Of his Commifſion 1776</i></p>	<p><i>mouth Harbour.</i> In November, 1775, he was ſtationed on <i>Pierce's Iſland</i> & acted as “<i>Sarjeant</i>” in “<i>Capl. Hobbs' Company</i>”——</p>
<p><i>Of his Refignation 1778</i></p>	<p>A Year later he received his Commiſſion as <i>Paymaſter</i> in the 3rd Continental Regt: of <i>New Hampſhire</i> under the Command of <i>Col: Scammel</i>. It was while ſerving in this Capacity that he wrote theſe Letters to his Father & Brother which portray ſo vividly the daily Life of a Revolutionary Soldier.——</p> <p>He reſign'd his Poſition as <i>Paymaſter</i>, June 1ſt, 1778 & returned to live in <i>Greenland</i>. Two Years later, in October, 1780, he married. (<i>Of his later Life, of his ſecond Marriage, of his thirteen Children, of his laſt Days in the Town of Hopkinton, let Others ſpeak.</i>)——</p>
<p><i>Of his Death 1843</i></p>	<p>He died, January 13th, 1843, in the eighty-eighth Year of his Age. <i>Requieſcat in Pace</i>——</p>

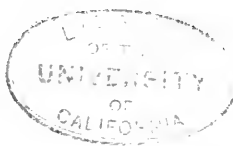
E d d y - W i n d s

WEATHER-WAFT, up & down, with every eddy-wind — thus does Nathaniel Ward characterize some of his fellow-countrymen in 1647. But *eddy-winds* were not confined to the early years of the American Revolution. To be sure, many of them are now forgotten, unknown, or misunderstood. Their *causes* are even more obscure than their own existence. Their *effects* are sometimes noticed but often assigned to wrong causes. In truth the *History of the American Revolution* has never been written. There are hundreds of books which deal with the subject but they only show the crying necessity for a comprehensive work which shall cover the period in its entirety & deserve to be read & re-read as long as there are Americans who need to study the problems of history & government.

But to produce such a work would require the services of a trained body of scholars for *thirty years*, while the true significance of such an undertaking is not sufficiently appreciated to warrant the outlay of time, money & men that would be required. At present the reading

*Of the
Nature of
Eddy-winds*

*Of a
Historie*



E d d y - W i n d s

*Of the voice
of the
Majority*

public demands "*Historical Novels*," "*founded on facts*," with the foundations buried so far underground that they are lost to view. Thirty years from now it may desire more truth & less fiction. But the people of *this* day & generation are not given to undertakings which do not promise immediate returns. *They are too busy*. To most of them, anything like a forest, which takes a generation in which to mature, is not worth planting. The idea of promoting a Historical Plant whose fruit would not ripen for thirty years, appears to them perfectly absurd. "*Let the trees plant themselves; they have done well enough alone in the past.*" "*Let works of History come as they please. Let those who choose publish* (if they can find a publisher)." Thus am I silenced. The Majority rules. *Nevertheless* we have a "United States Forester" & some day.——(?)——

*Of a
Record of
Observations*

But what has all this to do with the *Eddy-winds* which are shown by these Revolutionary *Straws*? Certainly *I* ought to be grateful that there is not yet in existence any body of experts who are devoting their entire time to the consideration of the problems of the *American Revolution*. If there were, my little book would have no *raison d'être*. As it is I have

E d d y - W i n d s

affixed the Straws where they may be seen and studied. I have watched their turning a little myself & have jotted down the record. If it reads like a collection of *Weather Reports*, I shall be satisfied. But before I give it you, I am going to make a prophecy. (*A prophet is only a fool*—so let me prophesy.) There will be a time when the value of *Truth* will be so appreciated that nothing needed in its Search will be found wanting. Yea, there will be found men, money & time to work together uninterruptedly for a whole generation, if need be, in search of the historical truth that lies in the *American Revolution*.—

A Prophecy

Meanwhile here is the Record of Observations. *The defeat of Burgoyne* was the turning point of the war. The first three letters cover part of the campaign before & after his defeat. In order that sentences worthy of special attention may not be overlooked I have repeated a few of them with brief comment.—

“The Army are somewhat unhealthy, their Dis-ease being chiefly the Fever Ague & Disentery, scarcely any but what have had some Complaint.”

Over a hundred years ago our armies suffered from the same disorders which afflict them now. Thus do we take advantage of the ex-

*Vide page
II*

E d d y - W i n d s

Vide page
13

perience of our fathers. *They* were short of proper clothing & slept "upon the bare Ground cover'd with Dew without Blanketts."———
"A Soldier's Life is such that no one can have a true Idea of without the Trial." And yet we are accustomed to think & believe that the Army was made up of backwoodsmen, frontiersmen, who were accustomed to all sorts of hardships.

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"One Hundred Indians in the woods do us more harm than 1000 British Troops." This must be an overstatement. However, one who had recently had a very narrow escape at the hands of these very natives might be forgiven. No British Soldier had ever done more to him than to run off with his wardrobe. It is *absurd* to suppose that one *Indian* was as good as ten of Burgoyne's Finest !———

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"The Hessians are very troublesome to Burgoyne." If Success lies in presenting a united front to the enemy and in "team-play," it is small wonder that Burgoyne was defeated. With his Hessians keeping up a "*continual Quarrelling with the British Troops*" & deserting to the American side "*in almost half Companys*," it is not hard to see why Gates was successful. The only wonder is that Burgoyne held out

E d d y - W i n d s

as long as he did. Possibly it was because the American officers were thinking so much of "*Coats*" & "*Hatts*" & of "*finding a convenient Opportunity of coming Home*" [in time for Thanksgiving].—

"*Tories are very TROUBLESOME here.*" From what follows this was certainly a mild epithet to apply to Americans who were believed to have "*sculp'd many of their Countrymen.*" It is difficult for us to believe that a British General had offered a premium for "*Sculps.*" Nevertheless the whole narrative of the "*sculpting*" goes a long way to explain the intense hatred of the Tories & their allies. Under such circumstances you could hardly blame any Soldier of the Continental Army for causing a Tory to "*swing*" as soon as he got the chance.—

"*There is a Number of very respectable Gentlemen in the Army.*" Of what sort were the rest, we are left to surmise as we please, but we can rest assured that there were at least "a number" of men whose training & breeding made them agreeable companions for our young Harvard Graduate.—

"*My Freshman Sumner . . . is a Captain of a Company from Milton.*" It was the custom at Harvard for the Freshman to be assigned

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14 & 15*

*Vide page
14*

*Vide page
14*

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13

as fags to the Seniors. Although long since forgotten, it has borne fruit & *resemblances* are not hard to find even to-day. Still it is a pity that the opportunity for careful education in College Traditions has become less.—

"If my wages were not higher than I expected when at Home, I would by no means tarry, but as they are raised, & for the Love I have for the Country, I can by no Means think of leaving the Army."

It must be confessed that this gives somewhat of a shock to our notions of the ideal *Revolutionary Soldier*. In *these* days of gross materialism no one would be surprised if an Officer whose pay was insufficient should leave the army, but that a Revolutionary hero should put an increase in his wages before the love he had for his country is quite impossible.—

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"My Wages are forty Dollars p' Month. W^m Weeks was a Paymaster. His salary, after it had been raised, was barely sufficient to enable him to keep in clean linen. Ruffled shirts were so expensive that a month's pay would only enable him to buy two cheap ones (p. 13). In addition to this he had received no pay for over a year.—

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"Our Officers & Men in general are destitute of Money & have the Itch very badly." It

E d d y - W i n d s

is difficult to see the connection here unless one reads the next sentence: "*Soon I expect the Money will come & their Wants be relieved & I hope cured of the Itch*" — which was evidently the well known disease which afflicts the palm of the hand, instead of being, as some have supposed, "an inflammation caused by the presence of a *Sarcoptes scabiei*." The latter has nothing whatever to do with Money but rather with Cleanliness. "*Gen' Congress*" was undoubtedly responsible for the presence of this deplorable state of affairs.

The scene shifts from the valley of the Hudson to the Camp at Valley Forge.

The Winter at Valley Forge was the crucial test of the American people. There were they weighed in the balances & found sufficient. The last two letters give us a glimpse of the intense severity of the process.

"*This Moment arriv'd a Quantity of Beef which seem'd to give Joy to every distressing Soul.*" The starving soldiers living on less than one-tenth rations; the faith in "*so good a man as His Excellency*;" the exuberant joy; what a picture! It needs no comment — but it needs to be read & re-read.

"*I had the Honour to take a Glass of Wine*

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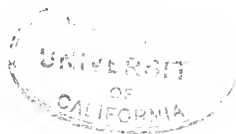
with Gen^l Washington & his Lady." Imagine the feelings of a young Harvard man of twenty-three drinking the health of the Cause with such companions! The personal influence of *Washington* kept the Army alive during the winter of 1777-8. To fully appreciate it, read again of the sufferings, & then read the last sentence in the letter: "*I should be glad if you would be careful of speaking about the bad Fare of the Army, as it might be a Discouragement to the men to enlist.*" (That sentence deserves to live. It might not be out of place, framed, in some of our Newspaper Offices.) We need no further evidence that *W^m Weeks* had talked with "*His Excellency.*"———
Here the Record stops. Take the *Straws* & use them. Perchance they may shew you divers other *Eddy-winds.*———

P o s t s c r i p t

TO *William Coolidge Lane, Esq^r*, Librarian of *Harvard University*, whose Friendship is one of my most valued *Possessions*, I desire to express my cordial Thanks, not only for his Kindness in allowing me to print these Letters which are in the Library, but also for adding the finishing Touch to these Pages by reading the Proofs— And now, most gentle Reader, if perchance thou hast derived Aught of *Pleasure* or of *Profit* in the Perusal of this little *Sheaf of Straws*, know then that they have not been gathered in Vain—

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Wm Bingham Jr



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*To the
Reader*

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